



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Region Four Headquarters
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, MT 59405
October 23, 2006

Decision Notice For Proposed Cottonwood Grove Fishing Access Site

Description of Proposed Action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks propose to purchase and operate the Cottonwood Grove Fishing Access Site as outlined in Alternative C in the Draft Environmental Assessment. This alternative would enhance public access to the Missouri River by providing an additional Fishing Access Site in a strategic location. In addition, it gives PPLM the ability to contribute additional money to the Missouri River Corridor Trust Fund to help fund other recreation projects in the corridor.

PPLM will pay to develop the Fishing Access Site after purchase of the property by MFWP. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will assume responsibility for routine maintenance of the site including restroom cleaning and stocking, vault toilet pumping, sign installation and maintenance, road maintenance, litter and refuse pick up, mowing and brushing, fence maintenance, and general site upkeep. PPLM will also contribute \$10,000 annually to help cover operations and maintenance costs.

The 0.8-mile gravel road accessing the site will be improved at a width of 24 feet. A portion of the road will be 16 feet through a subdivision area. This is due to engineering requirements for traversing a slope break down to the river and due to an agreement made with the previous landowner. On this short stretch of road, pullouts may be constructed if necessary to prevent safety hazards. Improvements will include the installation of speed control features intended to reduce dust and improve safety. MFWP will apply dust abatement materials on the 0.8-mile access road on an annual basis. Other site improvements would include a vault toilet and parking area.

Decision:

Based on the analysis in the EA, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has decided to proceed with this proposal.

Four letters or emails of public comment concerning the Draft Environmental Assessment (also termed the “EA” or the “Environmental Assessment”) were received during the comment period of August 11 through September 11, 2006. Three of those comments supported the proposed action.

I have reviewed the EA and applicable laws, regulations, and policies and have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

This action is subject to appeal, which must be submitted to the FWP Director in writing, and postmarked within 30 days of the date of this decision notice. The appeal must specifically describe the basis for the appeal, explain how appellant has previously commented to the Department or participated in the decision-making process, and lay out how FWP might address the concerns in the appeal.

Public Comments:

The following quotes are excerpted from the public comments received concerning the Draft Environmental Assessment (also termed the “EA” or the “Environmental Assessment”) during the comment period of August 1 to September 1, 2005. :

1. “On behalf of the Medicine River Canoe Club I wish to endorse your proposal to create river access between Ulm and Great Falls. Access is limited there, and that stretch of river is long with quiet river flow.”

Gilbert Payne, Medicine River Canoe Club

2. “If an area was open to the public I would sure use it for floating the river and I am sure that other flat water kayakers and canoes would also.” “Please register me as one who is in favor of establishing more access points close to Great Falls, along with half a dozen other boaters I sometimes float with.”

Keith Ochs, Great Falls, MT

3. “We believe the project is well thought out, should not cause significant changes in our neighborhood, and will be a public benefit. We do have some concerns and know you have given them some thought as well.” “We assume that the legal boundaries of the public access site will be clearly marked and that if users become a litter problem, or worse, vandals, we can call on FWP for help in protecting our land.” David and Lois Engbrecht, Great Falls, MT

4. “One of the biggest changes being is how popular the Missouri has become and the increase of floaters. Although there isn’t much we can do about the river being over run by people. I firmly don’t believe making the river more accessible is the solution.” Rudy Tramelli, Cascade, MT

FWP Response: FWP acknowledges the growing popularity of the Missouri River. The decision to proceed with the proposal is supported by the fact that

there is public demand for additional access to the river and presently there is no access in the general area of the proposed action. In addition, adding public access points at strategic locations can aid in dispersing and spreading out the recreational use on the river. This property was purchased by PPL Montana and if FWP did not step in and manage the site for public access, it is likely that some other entity would.

The Final Environmental Assessment may be viewed, or obtained from the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Region Four, Great Falls, MT. If you have questions regarding this decision notice, or the final EA, please direct requests and questions to: Mr. Gary Bertellotti, Region Four Supervisor, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59405, (406) 454-5840.

/s/

Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor